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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: AUGUST 20, 2009

Summary: Reports and photographs of U.S. Special Envoy Holbrooke's Karachi visit, his announcement that a "team of U.S. energy experts would arrive in Pakistan on Thursday (today)" and that "there was no quick solution for a crisis that has taken years to develop" received front-page coverage. His remarks that the "U.S. would start issuing business visas from Karachi" were also highlighted. Undersecretary Judith McHale's statement that the expansion of U.S. Embassy in Islamabad "reflected Washington's added focus on its relations with Pakistan" received prominent display. Several newspapers reported that the "U.S. CENTCOM General Petraeus called on Pakistan Army Chief Kayani and discussed latest military equipment for Pakistan." Some major dailies highlighted reports that the "nervous Afghans prepared to elect a president today as attacks go up."

In its editorial on the capture of TTP's spokesman Maulvi Umar, the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn," termed it "another blow for the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan." Toeing the line, the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" noted that "evidence is indeed already emerging that the Taliban have been quite badly damaged." Likewise, the liberal Urdu daily "Express," observed that the "successful security forces operation in Malakand Division has hit the morale of the extremists and it seems that this gang of killers is about to meet its fate." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"U.S. Energy Experts Due Today: Holbrooke" "Dawn" (08/20)

"President Barack Obama's envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke announced on Wednesday that a team of U.S. experts would arrive in Pakistan on Thursday to help address its energy crisis. Mr. Holbrooke said the steps were being taken to strengthen bilateral ties and facilitate Pakistan's access to international markets, especially the U.S. He said the measure would be a major step in strengthening relations between the city of Karachi, the business community and the people of Pakistan and the U.S."

"No quick Fix For Pak Energy Crisis, Says Holbrooke" "The News," "Jang" (08/20)

"President Barack Obama's envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan promised on Wednesday help for Pakistan's beleaguered power sector but said there was no quick solution for a crisis that has taken years to develop. 'The United States is committed to assisting

Pakistan to move beyond its current energy crisis and we are vigorously pursuing ways to expand our engagement,' Richard Holbrooke told a news conference in Karachi."

"No Magic Solution To Energy Crisis" "The Nation" (08/20)

"The United States is committed to assisting Pakistan to move beyond its current energy crisis and we are vigorously pursuing ways to expand our engagement, Richard Holbrooke told a news conference in Karachi. But let me emphasize that the U.S. does not have a magic solution for Pakistan's energy problems. They have been at least 25 years in the making, they were predicted by international economists and experts, and they will not be solved easily."

"U.S. To Issue Visas From Karachi, Says Holbrooke" "Business Recorder" (08/20)

"Announcing a 'major turn' in its relations with Pakistan, President Obama-led U.S. government on Wednesday announced to start issuing 100 business visas per week to the business community (in Karachi) ... the economic and commercial hub of your great nation and a three-pronged strategy to help Islamabad resolve the 'complex problem' of energy shortage, said Richard Holbrooke, while addressing a press conference in Karachi."

"Holbrooke Meets Sindh Governor Ebad, MQM Delegation" "The News" (08/20)

"The visiting U.S. special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke on Wednesday held a meeting with Sindh Governor Dr. Ishratul Ebad Khan at Governor House, Karachi and said that U.S. would specially focus on power sector in Karachi."

"LG System Must Stay: Holbrooke" "Daily Times" (08/20)

"The local government system should continue because it is necessary to promote strong, democratic institutions, U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke said on Wednesday."

"Holbrooke Lauds Pak Army Success In Malakand; Talk To Geo News" "The News" (08/20)

"U.S. Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, has commended the Pakistani troops for achievements in Malakand, and said that he never accused Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of helping Taliban. In an interview with the Geo News Holbrooke said he was impressed with the resolution of the Swat crisis and return of the IDPs to their areas."

"Pakistanis Mustn't Notice Marines Deployment: U.S." "The News" (08/20)

"The U.S. has said that it is working on a number of initiatives in the Congress to build a robust economic base for Pakistan and the U.S. Embassy expansion in Pakistan reflects our added focus of our relations with Pakistan, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy Affairs Judith McHale said in an exclusive interview with state-run radio."

"U.S. Clarifies Report About Marines' Strength In Embassy" "Dawn" (08/20)

"The U.S. State Department document that has provided details of the amount that is to be spent on the expansion of the American Embassy in the Pakistani capital does not mention anything regarding the strength of the Marine guards that will be part of the additional staff. In response to a report published in 'Dawn' on Wednesday, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy pointed out that the reference to the construction of a residential compound for 1,000 Marines is incorrect and there is no mention of Marines' strength in the State Department document. Talking to a group of journalists earlier this week U.S. ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson had said that after the facility's expansion about 18 to 20 Marines would be posted there."

"PPP Leader Raza Rabbani Moves Senate Against Expansion In U.S. Embassy" "Express" (08/20)

"Chairman Parliamentary Committee for National Security and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader, Mian Raza Rabbani, on Wednesday submitted a Call Attention Notice in the Senate Secretariat demanding the House to discuss the issue of expansion in the U.S. Embassy. 'According to the recurring media reports, the U.S. is expanding its Embassy in Islamabad' reads the notice."

"Petraeus, Kayani Discuss Latest Equipment For Pakistan Army" "The News" (08/20)

"Chief of United States Central Command (CENTCOM) David Petraeus called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani at General Headquarters on Wednesday. The U.S. General assured the Army Chief that latest and sophisticated military equipment would be provided to Pakistan, sources told Online."

"Petraeus, Kayani Discuss Waziristan" "Daily Times" (08/20)

"A day after it was reported that a full-scale offensive in South Waziristan may take several months, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Chief Gen. David Petraeus and Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Ashfaq Kayani discussed preparations to take on Taliban in the rugged region. The CENTCOM Chief called on the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq to discuss the prevailing security situation and the war on terror. Sources said the Petraeus and Kayani discussed the security situation along the Pak-Afghan border."

"Nervous Afghans Vote Today" "The Nation" (08/20)

"Nervous Afghans prepared to elect a president today, reeling from a surge in Taliban attacks as the government lashed out, threatening to expel foreign journalists who report violence on polling day."

"Fears Of Large-Scale Poll Fraud In Afghanistan" "Dawn" (08/20)

"Voter registration cards are for sale by the handful on the streets of Afghan cities and villages. Somebody even registered U.S. pop star Britney Spears to vote in Thursday's presidential election - copies of her card were widely emailed and, for a while, pinned up in a Kabul hotel bar. One Afghan man in a village not far from Kabul had a sackful of cards buried by a stream at the back of his house, for sale to anyone who asked - but he'd prefer if they were used to vote for President Hamid Karzai. The question is not whether fraud will be perpetrated in Thursday's election, already described as imperfect by the United Nations and many western observers, but whether it will be of sufficient magnitude to influence the outcome of the vote."

"Maulvi Fazeer Claims Taking Over TTP Leadership" "Dawn" (08/20)

"Taliban commander Maulvi Fazeer Mohammad from Bajaur has claimed taking up the position of Baitullah Mehsud temporarily, the BBC reported. He has also announced the appointment of Muslim Khan as the Tehrik-i-Taliban's Chief spokesperson."

"Suspected Al Qaeda Man Found Dead In Peshawar" "Dawn" (08/20)

"The body of a suspected Al Qaeda leader was found in a house in Peshawar on Wednesday. According to officials, the body with multiple wounds was of Abdullah Noori, son of Abdul Qadir, an Algerian believed to be Osama bin Laden's top aide."

"Soldier Among Four Killed In Bajaur" "The News" (08/20)

"Unidentified armed men shot dead three persons, including a soldier of the Bajaur Levies, in Shago area while security forces killed a militant and arrested four others in different areas in the Khar subdivision of Bajaur Agency on Wednesday, tribal sources said."

"Three Blasts Hurt 13 In Balochistan" "Dawn" (08/20)

"Three explosions injured 13 people, including two Frontier Corps personnel and two policemen, in Balochistan on Wednesday when miscreants hurled a bomb at their vehicle on Hospital Road in Khuzdar and escaped. In Quetta, three people were injured when a bomb attached to a motorcycle went off in the Chaki Shahwani area. Two policemen were injured when a hand grenade was hurled at their check-post in the premises of Balochistan University."

"PM Rules Out Musharraf's Treason Trial" "Dawn" (08/20)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday ruled out his government would seek a trial of former military President Pervez Musharraf for high treason, declining - at the risk of a political fallout."

"U.S. Officials Question Pakistani Journalist" "Dawn" (08/20)

"U.S. immigration officials have questioned a Pakistani journalist to determine whether he could apply for asylum in the United States. Immigration officials questioned Rahman Bunairee for about 20 minutes on Tuesday and decided to hold another hearing before announcing their determination. To qualify for asylum, Mr. Bunairee has to demonstrate that he has a 'credible fear' of being tortured or persecuted if he returns to Pakistan. If he does, it's likely that he'll be released and allowed to apply for asylum."

"Baghdad Bombings Claim 95 Lives" "The News" (08/20)

"A wave of attacks across Baghdad killed at least 95 people on Wednesday in the worst day of carnage to hit the Iraqi capital in 18 months and the bloodiest since U.S. troops pulled out of the conflict-torn nation's cities."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Maulvi Umar," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (08/20)

"The capture of Maulvi Umar, a success hot on the heels of the killing of Baitullah Mehsud, is another blow for the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.... Indeed, the main question has yet to be answered: does the state have a coherent, workable plan for regaining some semblance of control over FATA and eliminating the safe havens of militants there? Complicating that question is the fact that it is not clear yet if the security forces are in the process of mopping up in Malakand division or whether they are hunkering down for a guerrilla war in the months ahead. If the security forces get bogged down in Swat, it is debatable whether they will seriously consider tackling the vastly bigger mess that is FATA. So while Maulvi Umar's capture is a boon, it raises more questions than it answers."

"Taming The Taliban," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (08/20)

"The possibility that it may actually prove possible to rein in the Taliban is growing. The capture of Maulvi Omar, a spokesman for the group and a close aide of Baitullah Mehsud raises hopes in this respect.... Evidence is indeed already emerging that the Taliban have been quite badly damaged. However, there is still a great deal more that needs to be done.... In some of the seminaries and other training institutions based not only in tribal areas but also in our major cities, attempts continue to produce just such militants.... The task for the military and the civilian set up is now to continue their joint effort and implement plans aimed at altering the nature of life in places that the Taliban had seized, so that, in the future, they cannot make a comeback initiating a new orgy of violence."

"Arrest Of Maulvi Umar: Possibility Of Extremists End Increases," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (08/20)

"The arrest of banned TTP spokesperson Maulvi Umar is an important success of the security forces.... The successful security forces operation in Malakand Division has hit the morale of the extremists and it seems that this gang of killers is about to meet its fate."

"A Big Blow," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (08/20)

"The arrest of Maulvi Muhammad Omar, a senior leader of the Tehrik Taliban Pakistan and its spokesman, from Mohmand Agency, and other deaths and arrests, indicate that the military operation is

weakening the TTP top hierarchy as well as the rank and file.... While top commanders like Baitullah Mehsud, as Omar confirms, have been killed, others are on the run. Their capacity to strike at will and spill the blood of innocent people has now been seriously compromised.... This is a good opportunity to dismantle the TTP's network. The army ought to cash in on the changed situation and with the intelligence available from the captured militants act quickly."

"Maulvi Umar's Arrest, Confirmation Of Baitullah's Death" an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (08/20)

"Maulvi Umar's arrest will be a difficult patch for Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and information extracted from him will put the security forces in a position of advantage."

"Beyond The Narrow Confines," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (08/20)

"The Special Envoy Holbrooke's fifth visit to Pakistan marks a clear departure from the United States' anti-terrorism specific bilateral relationship with Pakistan.... If and when to launch military operation in South Waziristan Richard Holbrooke now agrees that 'it is Pakistan's internal matter.'... At this stage it would be premature to say that Holbrooke's words and expressions herald in a paradigm shift in the Pak-U.S. relationship by seeking to broaden its base and widening its scope."

"Similar U.S., India Objectives Against Our Security: Jihad Now Obligatory Against Enemy" an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (08/20)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mahmud Qureshi has said that if India has prior information on extremist organizations inside Pakistan planning attack on India then it should come up with the proof. The statement of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh cannot be ignored in this respect, he added.... Our rulers are aware of our enemy and its patron, America's conspiracies, but they are falling in love with them. This policy is against national pride and the country's security.... We should not be ashamed of Jihad or apologetic about it and should prepare ourselves for it. This is the way to teach a lesson to our enemy for its nefarious conspiracies and stubbornness."

"Need To Keep An Eye On Indian Designs," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (08/20)

Indian Defense Minister A.K. Anthony has said terrorist training camps inside Pakistan are a threat to Indian security.... Meanwhile, Indian External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna has accused Pakistan of using American military aid against India and said that American administration has been informed of Indian reservations in this respect.... Indian allegations are not new for Pakistan. India has always tried to take advantage by keeping the atmosphere tense. Prior to this, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had leveled an amusing allegation that terrorist organizations inside Pakistan are planning an attack on India.... There is a need to take note of this new Indian propaganda campaign against Pakistan; summoning of Indian Ambassador is not enough. The government of Pakistan should make it clear on India that any adventurism will be responded to sternly."

"Will The Taliban Re-Emerge?," an op-ed by Air Marshal (Retd) Ayaz Ahmed Khan in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (08/20)

"The next mission of the Pakistani armed forces is to bring normalcy to North and South Waziristan. The military planning for this mission seems to be in order.... After the death of Baitullah Mehsud; with disarray in the ranks of TTP insurgents and continued air strikes, there are likely to be more defections, with the demoralized Taliban wishing to surrender."

"Saifullah In Islamabad," an op-ed by Zafar Hilaly in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000)

(08/20)

"That Saifullah, the possible successor and right-hand man of Pakistan's most notorious outlaw, Baitullah Mehsud, was being treated in the environs of Islamabad by a team of doctors speaks volumes. It suggests that Pakistan's capital, arguably the best-protected city in all Pakistan, leaks like a sieve. It amounts to one more sad revelation of just how deep and pervasive is the penetration of civil society by extremists and the failure of our much vaunted intelligence apparatus to prevent it. This is the inescapable conclusion that is drawn unless we are prepared to believe that the establishment is complicit in allowing extremists to set up an effective support system in Islamabad and its environs, so much so that even their war wounded are brought there for treatment and recovery, safe from the reach of the law."

"A Slow Return To Normalcy," an op-ed by Gloria Caleb in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (08/20)

"According to government officials although 90 per cent of the valley has been cleared of the Taliban, the militants' presence in certain pockets continues to haunt the local people. This has not only caused resentment among the returnees but has also created a new breed of internally displaced from the Matta, Kanju and Kabal areas.... In addition to the enormous task of starting life anew, the returnees are also troubled by rumors of another exodus on the way. 'If true, this would be the worst atrocity committed against us,' says Nasim, a housewife who resides in Mingora. She, like many others, says that come what may, dying in Swat is better than leaving home again."

"Beyond The Narrow Confines," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (08/20)

"In a press conference, they (Richard Holbrooke and Foreign Minister Shah Mehmud Qureshi) talked more in terms of expanding the existing narrow-based economic relationship, so much so that the U.S. official even volunteered to help Pakistan overcome its energy crisis. How and when, there was no immediate elucidation except the reported remark attributed to unidentified sources that the host officials did ask for civilian nuclear technology assistance - only to be rebuffed and warned in return not to seek it even from any other source including France."

"Energy Needs Be Fulfilled With Chinese Help," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (08/20)

"PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif has said in a meeting with Chinese Ambassador that China should help Pakistan combat the energy crisis.... Our government has given bases to America and redeployed troops from eastern to western border in order to safeguard U.S. interests. Obama says that America is a natural ally of India as both have similar values. America does not even like our nuclear power status. Trusting America is nothing but self deception.... Energy and economic crises could be dealt with Chinese help rather than American.... China should be contacted for fulfilling energy requirements and it will surely not disappoint Pakistan; it can even build Kalabagh Dam."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)  
Feierstein